

Mr. Brezhnev's Little Surprise



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IT CAN NOW be revealed how World War III was narrowly averted during the first private negotiating session between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Brezhnev.

What precipitated the problem was the unknown fact that Mr. Brezhnev, to please his host, had secretly taken a crash course in idiomatic English. In fact, he could speak it like an American.

So it was a dramatic scene when the White House doors closed behind the two powerful leaders and Mr. Brezhnev smiled, extended his hand and unveiled his linguistic surprise:

"Well, Dick," he said, "how's tricks?"

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"LOOK HERE, Brezhnev," said Mr. Nixon angrily, "is that a crack?"

"I must have used the wrong form of greeting," said Mr. Brezhnev as he frowningly pulled a phrase book from his raincoat pocket. "Hah! Here's one. As they say on your Wall Street, 'What's up?'"

"Now, wait a minute . . ."

"Then we make the small talk," said Mr. Brezhnev, flipping through the phrase book. "Ah, here! Seen anything good on tee-vee lately?"

"I don't have to take this, you know," said Mr. Nixon, his voice rising.

"And may I say," said Mr. Brezhnev, reading, "that you look as sound as a dollar."

"You're no spring chicken yourself," said Mr. Nixon. "But let me take your hat and coat."

"Yes," said Mr. Brezhnev, "I hear it is very hard to get help these days."

"That's not true," said Mr. Nixon. "I have General Haig and former Defense Secretary Laird and Colonel . . ."

"I'm glad you don't have to worry about a military takeover of the White House," said Mr. Brezhnev politely. "But enough small talk. As Comrade Kosygin

and I agreed after you and Mrs. Nixon visited Moscow last year, we can't stand pat."

"Mrs. Brezhnev is no cupcake either," said Mr. Nixon, clenching his fists.

"Thank you," said Mr. Brezhnev. "But let us get down to the bread and butter issues . . ."

"As I said in my economic message, the price of bread and butter under Phase Four . . ."

"I was speaking of security."

"As I said in my 4000-word statement last month, I approved wiretaps and illegal entries solely in the interests of national security."

"I meant global security. Now that the problem of the Germans has been disposed of . . ."

"Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, as I said, were two fine civil servants . . ."

"And seeing as how you're running out of gas . . ."

"My administration is as vigorous as ever!"

"I was referring to the gasoline we are willing to sell you," said Mr. Brezhnev, mopping his brow. "Please, let our past differences be like water, as you say, over the gate."

"Dam!" cried Mr. Nixon, leaping to his feet.

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IT WAS at this point that World War III and a fist fight were averted when Mr. Brezhnev hastily brought in translators to conclude the successful negotiations.

When Mr. Kosygin chided Mr. Brezhnev by telephone for not having put the screws to Mr. Nixon as planned, Mr. Brezhnev just sighed.

"Believe me," he said, "he's got enough troubles already."